



Grand Canyon College of Education Commencement

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer
Friday, April 30, 2010

President Player -- members of the board -- faculty -- staff -- members of the Grand Canyon community -- parents -- family members -- and most important -- the Class of 2010.

Thank you very much.

Dr. Knott, thank you for that kind introduction.

I seem to recall -- back in March -- before your baseball team played highly-rated ASU -- that the "A" on ASU's "A Mountain" suddenly turned a delightful shade of purple.

Now, I am not saying that anyone here was responsible ... but, even given that remote possibility -- by the authority invested in me as Governor, I hereby pardon any and all responsible.

First, I congratulate the parents here who have sacrificed to make this day possible.

When your child graduates from college, or achieves a graduate degree, it is a day worth celebrating -- for you -- your graduate -- your family -- and it's not a bad day for your wallet, either.

Graduates, I do not have to tell you, that you've had the support of your loving families. Mothers and fathers have sacrificed for you to reach this day.

Some -- or perhaps most of you -- may have put yourselves through school while providing for your own families.

All the while, you also were fortunate to have a strong network of colleagues sharing your experience, those on whom you could rely -- seemingly -- twenty-four hours a day,

seven days a week – the non-stop educational system that has been created in our digital world.

And, you have had the guidance of outstanding Grand Canyon professors – men and women -- who honored their own dedication to each and every one of you, each and every class – many of them on-line.

I applaud them for their professionalism, and I commend them for their work product – YOU -- this outstanding class of 2010.

It is exciting to know that Grand Canyon graduates will go out into the community – local AND global community, focused on "Leading, Learning and Serving," engaging and promoting SERVANT LEADERSHIP – becoming effective practitioners -- making a difference in the lives of students and within communities.

Many of you are already at work, changing the lives of students, impacting their future.

You invest yourself emotionally, financially and physically.

You now have the SERVANT LEADERSHIP philosophy ingrained in your practice, so that you better serve your students, your colleagues, your parents, your schools and your communities.

You know servant leadership is leading by example and using your skills and actions to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

That is something I have tried to do my entire life.

That is something I learned from my favorite teacher, Edna Drinkwine – my mother.

My father died when I was 11 years old.

The challenges my mother, my brother, and I faced were daunting.

For an 11-year-old living in California, they were terrifying.

But, my mother taught me how to deal with those challenges – she met them head-on. She opened a dress shop and she went to work, 10 hours a day, 7 days a week.

I worked right beside her, every day after school and on weekends.

My mother didn't complain about counting every penny or being a widow with two children.

When life got hard, she worked harder. She never quit.

Let me tell you something: Edna Drinkwine died at the age of 87 – and she was my inspiration -- each and every day.

From her, I learned to make hard choices.

She taught me the value of action -- that if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

She taught me to honor our country.

She taught me that the only thing you're entitled to in life is a chance.

And, she taught me that doing the RIGHT thing, almost always means doing the HARD thing.

Like calling for an increase in taxes when more revenue is required.

Now, I've NEVER voted to raise taxes in my entire career. Not once in 28 years in public service. Not one time!

But, it's the right thing to do.

IF we are to preserve the core functions of the Arizona we all love ...

-- IF we want to keep funding Arizona's K-12 education system at reasonable levels to keep class sizes manageable so teachers have time to spend with students to help them learn -- those of you here today especially understand the challenges of managing a class that is too large, of investing your own money because there's never enough, of maintaining high standards and test scores despite dwindling resources ...

– IF we want to help our universities and community colleges – facing tuition increases of 15, 18, and 20 percent ...

– IF we want to keep felons locked up ...

-- and IF we want to aid Arizona's poorest families with the help they desperately need – those in school systems in which you will be teaching ... then we must have additional revenue.

Without that revenue, we will need to cut yet another billion dollars. Without it, education funding -- already at 2006 levels -- will be set back by at least 10 years and hundreds of millions of dollars.

Because as you all are well aware, wherever your home is, education seems to suffer the most when state budgets need to be balanced.

For me, there is no higher calling than to preserve public safety and funding for our schools and universities.

As our state and nation raise standards so students can compete in the global marketplace, we must also raise our expectations for ALL students – and OUR STATE.

That is why I have decided that Arizona will apply for the second round of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's "Race to the Top" educational funding competition.

We don't quit. But, whether we win or not in the second round, our mission is to reinvent Arizona's competitiveness -- at all levels -- by building on its strengths and its history of innovation.

In other words, no matter what happens ... WE WILL NOT LOSE.

And, this is where you come in.

Research tells us that good teachers are the ones who truly make a lifetime difference in students.

But, as our students look for guidance and inspiration from you – look to BELIEVE in you – always remember -- those same students need YOU to believe in THEM.

There is a wonderful legend about a king who decided to set aside a special day to honor his greatest subject.

When the big day arrived, there was a large gathering in the palace courtyard.

Four finalists were brought forward, and from these four, the king would select the winner.

The first person presented was a wealthy philanthropist.

The king was told that the man was highly deserving of the honor because of his humanitarian efforts. He had given much of his wealth to the poor.

The second person was a celebrated physician.

The king was told that this doctor was highly deserving of the honor because he had rendered faithful and dedicated service to the sick for many years.

The third person was a distinguished judge.

The king was told that the judge was worthy because he was noted for his wisdom, his fairness, and his brilliant decisions.

The fourth person presented was an elderly woman.

Everyone was quite surprised to see her there, because her manner was quite humble, and so was her dress.

She hardly looked the part of someone who would be honored as the greatest subject in the kingdom.

What chance could she possibly have, when compared to the other three, who had accomplished so much?

Even so, there was something about her — the look of love in her face, the understanding in her eyes, her quiet confidence.

The king was intrigued, to say the least, and some-what puzzled by her presence.

He asked who she was. The answer came: "You see the philanthropist, the doctor, and the judge?"

"She was neither of those. She was more than that. She was their teacher!"

And so, the elderly woman – the teacher – was, in fact, a SERVANT LEADER – who unselfishly dedicated herself to producing great people.

In the drama, "A Man For All Seasons," a young man, Richard Rich, is uncertain about his desire to become a lawyer, and approaches Sir Thomas More, seeking his advice on prospective careers.

But, Sir Thomas More surprises Rich and says, "Why not be a teacher? You'd be a fine teacher ... perhaps even a great one."

"And if I were," responds Rich, "well, who would know about it?"

And Sir Thomas More replies:

"You –

-- your pupils

-- your friends

-- and God.

"Not a bad public, that."

Indeed, Grand Canyon College of Education has an appreciative, admiring, thankful public, -- Jan Brewer among them.

So, I congratulate you, Class of 2010, on your life's victories that are unfolding in front of you.

Your mission is great, the work difficult, but your education is forever linked to Grand Canyon University.

Your success is about to be written.

May God guide you on your way.

Thank you.